

Verbatim copy of a letter written by W. L. Garrison to Sarah M. Douglass on the death of her mother and the remarkable James Foster

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Boston, March 18, 1842.

My dear Friend,

I hear that your beloved mother is now an angel in heaven! Are you in tears? Then it is on account of your loss, and not because she has not gained immensely by the transition from this to "another and a better world." My tears shall mingle with yours; but we will not sorrow as do those who are without hope. Our hope is in God, and therefore it is sure and steadfast. Death is not a calamity to the righteous, it is not even a trial. Jesus, the Conqueror, has plucked its sting, and robbed the Grave of its victory. What is mortal, must necessarily obey the laws of mortality. If from the dust the body was taken, why should we marvel, or grow morbid in our minds, when the dust receives its own? The sun rises and sets—day and night succeed each other—spring and summer, autumn and winter, are regular in their season. These are commoner events; but are they more common, or more natural, than the decay of our mortal bodies? Yet somehow or other, the occurrence of death seems almost always untimely—strange—unnatural. And yet, who would desire to live in the flesh time without end? It is the will of God that we should die, and it is of very little importance whether we be called away early or late, if we can at all times heartily say, "Thy will, O God, be done." It is enough that decay can never blight the spiritual flower; that the soul is stamped with immortality; that Christ is the Resurrection and the life; and that the rest prepared for the righteous is eternal.

I should be glad to hear more of the particulars of your mother's death. What was the nature of her illness? did she retain her senses to the last? I will not inquire as to her readiness to depart, for I feel assured that it was only for her to know the will of her Creator, cheerfully to submit to it. How vividly are her features impressed upon my memory! How pleasant was the smile that she habitually wore! how musical her voice! how gentle and Christ-like her spirit! how keen and exquisite her susceptibilities of mind! It always refreshed my spirit to visit your house, and enter into conversation with her; and never shall I forget how cordial was the greeting on her part, on every such occasion. Should I be permitted to visit Philadelphia again, I shall undoubtedly realize her loss much more sensibly than I can do at present. I hope that your dear Father sustains his great ~~burden~~ ^{burden} with christian resignation and fortitude. I entertain a high respect for him, and desire you to give him my warmest sympathies and my best regards. Whether we meet again on earth, or not, let us all be "Dressed for the flight, and ready to be gone". How is your own health? Are you still residing under the family roof? Is teaching still your vocation? What has been Robert's success, since his return from Europe? Does he contemplate pursuing his profession in Philadelphia? Do you perceive any change for the better, in your city, on the score of prejudice? Has the union of the Freeman with the Standard increased the anti-slavery spirit among you?

Our venerable friend James Forten has also paid the debt of nature. When I was in Philadelphia the last time, he was complaining of ill health, but I did not then suppose that I should behold him no more on earth. But who can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth? He was a man of rare qualities, and worthy to be held in veneration to the end of time. He was remarkable for his virtues, his self respect, his catholic temper, his christian urbanity. An example like his, is of inestimable value, especially in the mighty struggle now taking place between liberty and slavery - reason and prejudice. It is pleasing to know that he met death calmly and happily. I hear that, almost in the hour of dissolution, he desired to be cordially remembered to me, and other abolition friends. This fact deeply affects ~~me~~ and animates my heart.

You have now in Philadelphia, our mutually beloved friend Henry C. Wright. The world hates him, because he is not of the world. He is one of the most indefatigable and enlightened reformers that have ever suffered in the cause of righteousness. Yet how much is he slandered, how widely contemned, how basely misrepresented! May his health, strength, and life long be precious in the sight of the Lord!

If you should ^{to see} see Dr Moore and wife, Mary West and wife, Mrs Forten and family, and other dear and well known friends of mine, please remember me to them individually with great affection.

I remain yours in the bonds of christian sympathy,
Wm Lloyd Garrison.

Should like much to know
whether my letters reach their
destination